

REMARKS

Claims 1 and 3-10 are pending. Claims 1, 3, and 4 have been amended. Claim 2 has been cancelled. Claims 7-10 are newly presented. Reconsideration and allowance of the present application based on the following remarks are respectfully requested.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 1-3 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. Applicants have amended the claims to correct the informalities previously contained therein. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that this objection is moot.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102 and 103

A. Claim 1 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) over Walker et al. (U.S. Publication No. 2002/0013708) and claims 2 and 3 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Walker in view of Socher et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,446,040). Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections.

Claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the features of claim 2 which has been cancelled. Claim 1 recites, in part, a communication method among participants connected through a network in virtual environments, that includes converting a text message into speech, and determining a sound effect by grasping a virtual position of the sender and the sender's surroundings. As admitted in the Office Action, Walker fails to teach or suggest determining a sound effect. The Office Action, on page 4, asserts that Socher teaches such a feature. Applicants respectfully disagree.

Socher merely discloses adding background music or sound effects to speech (see, for example, the abstract and column 2). Socher does not teach or suggest using the virtual position of the sender or the sender's surroundings to determine a sound effect. Accordingly, no combination of Walker and Socher teach or suggest a communication method among participants connected through a network in virtual environments that includes converting a text message into speech, and determining a sound effect by grasping a virtual position of the sender and the sender's surroundings, as recited in claim 1.

Claim 3 is believed allowable for at least the same reasons presented above with respect to claim 1 by virtue of its dependence upon claim 1 and because Socher does not remedy at least the deficiencies of Walker discussed above. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of these rejections.

B. Claims 4-6 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Walker in view of Abe (U.S. Patent No. 5,940,797) and further in view of Socher. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Claims 4-6 are believed allowable for at least the same reasons presented above with respect to claim 1 because claim 4 also recites the conversion of text to speech and providing a sound effect to the user by grasping a position of the sender and the sender's surroundings and because Abe does not remedy the deficiencies of Walker and Socher discussed above. Therefore, no combination of Abe, Walker, and Socher teach or suggest the subject matter of claims 4-6. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection.

New Claims

Claims 7-10 are newly presented, fully supported by the originally filed specification and believed allowable over the prior art of record.

Conclusion

Therefore, all objections and rejections having been addressed, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in a condition for allowance and a Notice to that effect is earnestly solicited.

Should any issues remain unresolved, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned attorney for Applicants at the telephone number indicated below in order to expeditiously resolve any remaining issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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